PREFACE

For many years plant pathologists in Europe encountered *Cephalosporium*- or *Acremonium*-like species that were associated with a grapevine decline disease. These fungi were initially documented in Sicily by Petri in 1912, and later in California by Chiarappa in 1959. In the U.S.A., researchers found that diseased grapevines examined in cross section oozed a dark, sticky substance; this material was compellingly nicknamed "black goo." The unidentified cephalosporioid fungi seemed to be associated with its production. Coincidentally, in the medical field, Ajello *et al*. 1974 described a fungus similar to those isolated from grapevines as *Phialophora parasitica*. It was a regularly occurring causal agent of subcutaneous phaeohyphomycosis in humans.

Hawksworth *et al.* (1976) made the initial link between the medical and agricultural isolates, but also commented on the morphological diversity observed among isolates initially identified as *P. parasitica*. As the disease in grapevines spread and became more serious, researchers were forced to resolve the issues surrounding the taxonomy of the causal organisms. Research on this topic really gained momentum when Walter Gams sent all strains available at the time in the Centraalbureau voor Schimmelcultures (CBS) to Pedro Crous in South Africa. This led to a chain of events, namely the description of the genera *Phaeoacremonium* (with *P. parasitica* redisposed as the type species *Phaeoacremonium parasiticum*) and *Phaeomoniella*, the initiation of the *International Council on Grapevine Trunk Diseases*, and a strongly focused international research programme on grapevine trunk diseases. Special emphasis was given to fungi associated with black goo or brown wood streaking, particularly *Phaeomoniella chlamydospora* and certain *Phaeoacremonium* species. In subsequent years, several students worked on this topic. The bulk of one such study forms the basis of the current issue of the *Studies in Mycology*. The relocation of Lizel Mostert and Pedro Crous from Stellenbosch University, South Africa, to CBS in the Netherlands, and the subsequent involvement of Richard Summerbell, led to the inclusion of several previously unrecognised medically important species into this study. The discovery of *Togninia* sexual states for many of the new plant- and human-derived species, and the elucidation of the differing mating strategies employed by different species, brought a further level of complexity to the project, and also raised several tantalizing new research questions.

We hope that the present monograph, together with its dichotomous and novel polyphasic online identification keys, will provide a solid foundation for *Phaeoacremonium* biosystematics, as well as a springboard facilitating future research into this exciting group of fungi.

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